

Workforce Board

Legislative Agenda – Potential Endorsement Requests

Project/Request Summary

Program Title: AmeriCorps Stipend

1. Workforce Board Member Sponsor Name:
Cami Feek, Employment Security Department
2. Staff Contact for the Project:
Caitlyn Jekel, Employment Security Department
3. Short Project Description (ideally, 100 words)
The Employment Security Department (ESD), through the Washington Service Corps (WSC) and in cooperation with Serve Washington, requests funding and appropriation authority to create and implement WSC Poverty Peer Navigators to serve in the WorkSource System and provide an increased living stipend to all AmeriCorps members serving in programs administered by the Employment Security Department.
4. What is the project?
 - Increasing the monthly stipend for members: This means 583 members serving in an AmeriCorps program administered by ESD will receive the maximum monthly stipend allowed by AmeriCorps. This enhancement will help ensure that their service in AmeriCorps does not require them to remain in poverty or enter poverty during their service term.
 - Implementing a Poverty Peer Navigator model in the WorkSource System in partnership with LWDBs: We propose dedicating 72 of the total WSC members as Poverty Peer Navigators – an average of two in each [WorkSource office](#) that ESD staffs with reemployment and training staff. These 72 WSC Poverty Peer Navigators will be individuals who are themselves experiencing poverty and will help low-income WorkSource customers access the services and benefits they need to move toward self-sufficiency. These individuals will both serve as a valuable resource to their peers, and themselves gain a greater understanding of the supportive services and career planning services they have access to through the WorkSource system. Local ESD Administrators will be responsible for the Navigators as an ESD resource to the office and would partner with one stop operators and LWDB leadership on the best ways to deploy them.
5. Estimated Cost, Fund Source, & FTE Needs
\$12,010,741, 3 FTE
6. Potential Leveraged Resources
AmeriCorps grant - \$6,124,500.00.
Private/public funding (site contribution) - \$3,849,400.00
OFM is running a companion DP to provide similar benefits through Serve Washington
7. Responsible Entities
Washington Service Corps
8. Proposal Format (proviso, statutory change, other).
Budget Proviso

9. What has been done by your organization regarding this work in the past? (If proposal would add to or continue an existing initiative. Answer N/A if not relevant.)

This proposal is modeled after prior successes, including WSC digital literacy navigators and Peer Navigators used in response to the opioid epidemic through federal WIOA Dislocated Worker Grants.

10. Why is this needed now?

[AmeriCorps](#) recruits people experiencing poverty, but the federal stipend range means that the AmeriCorps members are often kept in working poverty. One of the largest AmeriCorps programs in the state, the Washington Service Corps (WSC) is administered by ESD. WSC is a statewide AmeriCorps intermediary program placing 450 WSC, 125 WA Reading Corps and eight AmeriCorps Public Health members with community organizations, governmental agencies, tribal entities, and faith-based organizations to expand the impact of their community projects. Each member reaches beneficiaries in marginalized and impoverished communities, in focus areas such as economic opportunity, health, education, and environmental education and sustainability.

The WSC [intermediary model](#) involves a contractual agreement with site partners. The site is responsible to pay a portion of the AmeriCorps members stipend, known as the *site contribution*. This site contribution has a minimum and maximum limit to remain within the total stipend range set by AmeriCorps. For most site partners, this is a heavy financial burden and they often cannot offer the higher end of the stipend. While WSC sites can recruit people to serve within the community, the stipend offered is low and as a result keeps members serving in poverty.

11. What is the impact?

- Increasing member diversity and representation by recruiting members from the communities they are serving. This is part of Serve Washington's State Service Plan, WSC's Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) strategy.
- In addition to the direct benefits provided to the member, research indicates peer model intervention and support is highly impactful to beneficiaries participating in services provided.
- Developing these positions through WSC has the benefit of the federal government paying for a portion of the stipend.
- In addition, increased stipends to ESD AmeriCorps members will create pathways for people with lived experience in poverty to work on poverty-related projects in community organizations while receiving increased income so they themselves are not earning below 200% of the federal poverty line.
- This proposal will help assist the 72 Poverty Peer Navigators themselves understand and navigate the multiple benefits and services they may need to escape poverty as they become trained on how to support others.
- This proposal emphasizes equity, links Washington Service Corps and all AmeriCorps programs in Washington more closely with the poverty reduction system.